

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Nassau Hall

AND/OR COMMON

Nassau Hall, Princeton University

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER South side of Nassau Street, near
John Street, Princeton University Campus

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Princeton

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

5

VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

CODE

34

COUNTY

Mercer

CODE

21

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Trustees of Princeton University

STREET & NUMBER

Nassau Hall

CITY, TOWN

Princeton

VICINITY OF

STATE

New Jersey

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Mercer County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Market Street

CITY, TOWN

Trenton

STATE

New Jersey

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1936

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress-Division of Prints & Photographs

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT

DETERIORATED

UNALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE

GOOD

RUINS

ALTERED

MOVED DATE _____

FAIR

UNEXPOSED

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Nassau Hall, on the campus of Princeton University, was constructed 1754-56, after a plan prepared by Dr. William Shippen and Robert Smith of Philadelphia. Smith, a famous Philadelphia carpenter whose works included Carpenters' Hall in Philadelphia, is credited with the lion's share of the design, and served as the supervisor of construction as well. William Worth, a local mason, is credited with the stonework.

The rectangular stone hall measured 177' in length and 55 & 2/3' in width, with three stories and a raised cellar. The north (front) side had three flat-arched doors reached by stairways which offered three separate entries to the building. The central doorway was set in a central section of five bays which protruded from the body of the building in the front and especially the rear. The central section was crowned by a simple pediment above the third story, which was pierced by a circular central window, and ornamented by urns at the three angles of the pediment. In the center of the hip roof Smith set a plain cupola with a weather vane, in the same manner as the cupola on Carpenters' Hall. Aside from these features and the flat key arches over the windows and doorways, Nassau Hall was a simple and unornamented building in a plain Georgian style. Its interior was composed of a central hallway running the full length of the building on the three main floors, with students' rooms and classrooms on either side of the hall. The central section housed a two-story prayer hall on the first floor at the rear, and a library on the second floor, at the front. In the cellar were the kitchen, dining area, and storeroom.

In 1802, a disastrous fire consumed Nassau Hall, leaving only the stone walls standing. The architect of the restoration was Benjamin Henry Latrobe. The major changes in Nassau Hall were few; they included a large square base for the belfry, which heightened the cupola, a large fanlight which replaced the circular light in the central tympanum, a raised roof, which allowed for transom lights over the doors, and triangular pediments, instead of plain, flat lintels, over the doors. Finally, Latrobe's new roof was covered with sheet iron, an innovative experiment which required reconstruction before it was successfully employed.

Once again, in 1855, Nassau Hall burned, except for its sturdy stone walls. Through John Notman's reconstruction of the building, Nassau Hall took on a pseudo-Italian Renaissance design of massive character. The first major change was effected at the eastern and western ends of the Hall, where Notman erected a pair of towers of stone, 10' square, interior measurement. The three story towers, which housed the stairs to the student lodgings, were topped with simulated Greek temples, which were removed in 1905. The second change was made in the central doorway (the two flanking entrances were walled in), which received a massive stone arch, framing double doors and a fanlight. Above the door a balcony was placed, extending from the third floor to the peak of the pediment. A massive, rusticated arch enclosed the window and fanlight, a smaller version of the Renaissance doorway below. The third major change was made in the reconstruction

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1754-6

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Nassau Hall, erected at Princeton, New Jersey in 1754-1756, and named in honor of King William III of the house of Nassau, was the first important collegiate building of the Middle Colonies and served as the prototype of many subsequent colonial college structures.

As the first permanent building of Princeton University, founded in 1746 as the College of New Jersey, Nassau Hall contained the dormitory, dining room, chapel, and classrooms.

Nassau Hall still serves as a vital part of the University, and presently houses the administrative offices.

HISTORY

Princeton University received a royal charter from George II under the seal of John Hamilton, Acting Governor of the Province of New Jersey, on October 22, 1746, under the official name, the "College of New Jersey." In 1752, the trustees decided to establish the permanent campus at Princeton, whose residents had raised 1,000 pounds and offered a tract of land. In 1754, ground was broken for Nassau Hall, and in the fall of 1756, Reverend Aaron Burr, Sr. and 70 undergraduates moved into the completed building. For nearly fifty years, Nassau Hall housed all the functions of the College.

During the Revolution, Nassau Hall served at different times as a barracks and hospital for Continental and British troops. It was the scene of the last stand of the British in the Battle of Princeton. In 1776 the first legislature of the state convened in it and, the first governor was inducted. From June to November, 1783, the Continental Congress sat in Nassau Hall. During this session it thanked Washington for his conduct of the war, received news that the treaty of peace had been signed, and officially received the first minister accredited to the new nation. In the course of its history, the Hall has been visited by scores of distinguished visitors, including virtually every president of the United States.

Nassau Hall was twice destroyed by fires which left only the walls standing. Benjamin Henry Latrobe restored the building after the fire of 1802, and John Notman did the same in 1856.

Nassau Hall today is devoted solely to administrative offices.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER 7

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of the cupola. The new cupola retained the same position as the old, but increased greatly in size. From an octagonal base, which tapered by steps to a belfry surmounted by a smaller cupola, the new tower completed the external revamping of the Colonial building. The dome of the tower was made of cast iron plates; the roof and floor beams were also of iron, all in an attempt to fireproof the building. The major change inside the Hall was the reconstruction of the old prayer room or chapel, as the new library. This room measured 74' by 36' with a cove cornice 30' above the floor. Its double door, with its semicircular transom, is set on an axis with the front door.

On either side of the new library, Nassau Hall was partitioned once again into student lodgings, fifty-four in all. These rooms were centrally heated through nine furnaces located in the basement. The two side sections and the center section were each accessible only through their individual exterior entrances, for reasons of quiet and comfort.

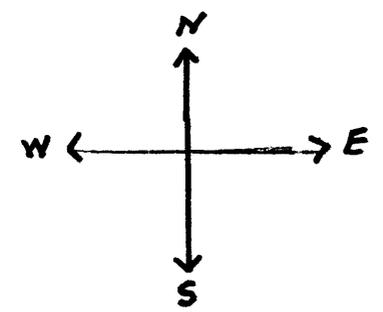
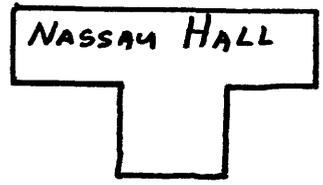
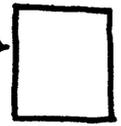
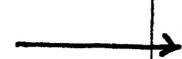
Today Nassau Hall appears much as it did upon the completion of Notman's restoration in 1860. The terminal stories of the lateral towers have been removed, and the interior has been reapportioned in its conversion to administrative offices, but the stone walls which endured the Battle of Princeton and two fires, retain the basic strength and simplicity which characterised their original appearance.

The green which extends from Nassau Street up to Nassau Hall has been a feature of the building since its construction. Although it has been planted with trees in differing manners over the years, the present shady expanse differs little from the original.

Witherspoon Street

NASSAU Street ←

President's House



Original Limits
of Princeton University
1756